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## IDEOLOGY, LITERACY AND MATRILINITY: APPROACHES TO MEDIEVAL TEXTS ON THE PICTISH PAST

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Medieval texts concerned with the origins and history of the Picts comprise some of the more intractable sources in the subject. Often found in texts written by outsiders and surviving in later manuscripts, the difficulty has been to determine what can legitimately be used as evidence for Pictish culture. However, if the development of these texts can be established, they could offer potentially vital contemporary evidence for Pictish society and for outside perceptions of the Picts in the Middle Ages. There are many texts which could be considered historical to some extent, but in this paper the Pictish king-lists and settlement accounts, sources which provide evidence for the ancient history of the Picts, will be focussed on.<sup>1</sup> The intention is to discuss the scholarship concerned with these texts, particularly since the publication in 1955 of the influential book *The Problem of the Picts*, edited by F.T. Wainwright (1955), as well as how approaches and our understanding have altered. It will also provide guidance for modern scholars on the often confusing proliferation of categorisations of different versions of these texts, as well as suggesting future avenues for research.

These sources did not form the basis for any of the chapters of *The Problem of the Picts*, but they were discussed by Wainwright, in his introductory chapter (1955, 1-53), and they comprised a major source for Kenneth Jackson's analysis of the Pictish language (Jackson, K.H. 1955, 129-66, 173-6). Wainwright (1955, 19-20) was cautious about using the Pictish king-lists because, despite the work of H.M. Chadwick (1949) and Marjorie Anderson (1949a, 1949b, 1950), he still thought that much more research needed to be done on them. However, he did discuss (Wainwright 1955, 10, 16-19, 25-8, 38, 46-7) the origin legends as evidence for Pictish matriliny, use the Pictish king-lists for kings after the late sixth century, and state that the sections of the lists before then were not reliable evidence for ancient Pictish kings. However, since *The Problem of the Picts*, there have been substantial advances in our understanding of these sources, so there is less reason to be cautious than in 1955.

One group of these sources, the Pictish king-lists, are unique textual survivals from the Pictish period, although they have been altered in various ways to fit later purposes. They are lists of 60 or more kings, presumably of all the Picts, with reign-lengths, from ancient times up to the mid or late ninth century. There are two main versions of the list, called *Series longior* (SL) and *Series breuior* (SB) by Molly Miller (1979b, 1-3; 1982, 159-61), although other scholars have given them different designations (see figure 1).

Miller (1979b, 1-3; 1982, 159-61)	Anderson (1973, x) <sup>2</sup>	Chadwick (1949, xxvii-ix)	Henderson (1967, 91-2); Wainwright (1955, 17)	Van Hamel (1932, 82-7)
<i>Series longior</i> (SL)	Group P	-	List 1; Group I	-

SL1	A	A	-	P
SL2H	C1	C	-	D
SL2M	C2	-	-	H
SL2O	B	B	-	-
SL2E	-	-	-	-
SL3	LB4 (1950, 16)	Bi	-	-
<i>Series breuior</i> (SB)	Group Q	-	2; II	-

Figure 1: Sigla used for the Pictish king-lists

*Series longior* (Anderson's 'Group P', Henderson's 'List 1'), is subdivided into three groups. The first of these is SL1 (Anderson's MS. A), found in the fourteenth-century Poppleton manuscript written in northern England, but derived from a compilation created 1202x14 (Miller 1982, 139). The other versions survive in Irish manuscripts: SL2 (Anderson's B, C and Cii)<sup>3</sup> in *Lebor Bretnach*, on the history of Britain, and SL3 (Anderson's LB4) in *Lebor Gabála Éirenn*, the 'Book of the Invasions of Ireland', and different manuscripts of *Lebor Bretnach* (Miller 1982, 159-61), in additions made in the twelfth century or later. The other group, *Series breuior* (Anderson's 'Group Q', Henderson's 'List 2') is found in Scottish manuscripts of the fourteenth century or later.

At the time of the *Problem of the Picts*, many of the lists had been edited by W.F. Skene (1867, 4-8, 24-30, 148-51, 172-4, 199-202, 285-7, 396-400), and detailed studies by H.M. Chadwick (1949, 1-34) and M.O. Anderson (1949a; 1949b; 1950) had been published in the previous decade. Chadwick's analysis contained much useful discussion of the lists, particularly of the names of kings, but less on the lists' textual history. His conclusion (Chadwick 1949, 2, 27, 30-4), that the two list groups (SL and SB) represented independent traditions, being dependent on oral transmission for the section before about the middle of the sixth century, was convincingly overturned by Anderson who studied the inter-relationships of each textual group's representatives. Anderson identified that SL1 had a separate origin from the 'Chronicle of the Kings of Alba', the text immediately following it in the Poppleton manuscript (1949a, 37-8), analysed the SB (1949b) and SL groups, arguing that SL2 was in existence by 1093, and that a written common source was shared with SB up to the reign of King Nectan son of Der-Ilei in the 720s, after which the two groups were independent (1950, 18). The general agreement of reign-lengths and correspondences of details made it likely that a written source underlay the lists before the 720s, while linguistic variation between the generally Gaelic spelling of names in SB and the usually Pictish orthography (similar in some respects to Welsh) of SL could have been the result of people knowing how the same names were written in the two related languages in the Pictish period or later, so the linguistic differences could be a product of later copying (1950, 18).<sup>4</sup>

In *Kings and Kingship in Early Scotland* (1973, esp. 52-67, 77-102, 116-18, 212-15, 235-91), Anderson built on this research, providing new, more accurate, editions of many of the king-lists, and a detailed study of both branches, although many of the basic conclusions had been present in her previous publications. The main exceptions were the propositions that the pseudo-historic section only found in SL was added not much later than 877, and that the surviving SB witnesses derived from a common source written at some point from 1214 to 1249 (Anderson 1973, 52, 102). Nevertheless, and despite not focussing on the ideological aspects of the text, this monograph placed the study of the king-lists on a new more solid foundation,

through its sound and comprehensive analysis of the textual development of these sources.<sup>5</sup>

The depiction of Pictish history was the subject of another important study, undertaken by Molly Miller in her article 'The disputed historical horizon of the Pictish king-lists' (1979b). This convincingly argued that the list was contemporary by the reign of Gartnait son of Donuel (*ca.* 656–63), and suggested that the pre-historical section of the lists either had reigns based on multiples of 14 which underlay the 84-years Easter cycle used in Pictland before the 710s, or were scholarly commentaries on this (Miller 1979b, 9-12, 16-27, 32). This theory is questionable, since Miller's reconstruction (1979b, 2, 11-12, 22, 26-7, 32-4) involved the emendation of some reign-lengths, and a radically different perception of the dates and inter-relationships of the various versions from that proposed by Marjorie Anderson.<sup>6</sup> Also, unfortunately, Miller used a copy of John of Fordun's version of the list which was based on a corrupt manuscript lacking kings found in other witnesses, with negative consequences for her analysis.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless the numerical pattern in other versions is still quite striking; the question is, though, whether this was the result of chance or design.

More recently, without pursuing Miller's chronographical theories, Dauvit Broun has considered other potential ideological interests of the king-lists. In particular he has studied the additions at the start of the *Series longior* Pictish king-list, which begin with Cruithne, the Gaelic for 'Pict', and his seven sons, whose names seem to be the names of territories. Broun argued first that this was an ideological statement produced *ca.* 900 of the territory of Alba, which he has taken (1994a, 24-5; 1994b, 48-54) to be coterminous with Pictland, but more recently he has dated this (and the other additions Anderson dated to soon after 877) to 862x76, in the reign of Constantín mac Cináeda (Broun 2005, 245-52). It should be noted that the identification of this kingship with Alba is based on a stanza only found in SL3, so it probably was added to the king-list after the Pictish period. While it is possible that this particular stanza was the ultimate source for the addition of Cruithne and his sons in the ninth century, this is not certain.<sup>8</sup> What is clear, however, is that the section of the king-list with Cruithne and his sons was an important statement of the territoriality of the Pictish kingship (Broun 1994b, 49-52) since Cruithne is described as '*pater Pictorum habitantium in hac insula*', ('father of the Picts living on this island'), but it is also probably a recognition Pictish provinces were also significant. These seven territories in the king-list have often been equated with the divisions of *Albania* in the twelfth-century text *De Situ Albanie*, with, for example, the Pictish region of Fortriu being Strathearn and Monteith (for instance, see Anderson: 1973, 139-43). However, Broun (2000), following up the scepticism of Isabel Henderson (1967, 36-8), has argued that the two sources' territories are unlikely to correspond, which has created space for new interpretations of the political geography of Pictland, such as Alex Woolf's recent proposal (2006) that the Pictish province Fortriu was actually located in northern, rather than southern, Pictland. Broun (1999, 105-8, 197-200) has also analysed the later transmission of the SB Pictish king-lists, which are found with king-lists of Dál Riata and Alba, and discussed how this compilation was used to promote the idea of the kingdom of Scotia as a territory, and the kingship's antiquity in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in texts such as the Declaration of Arbroath.

It is clear that there have been substantial advances in our understanding of the Pictish king-lists since the late 1940s, but there are still aspects of the textual history and ideology where advances are possible. For instance, Marjorie Anderson (1973, 85-8) argued that the common source of *Series longior* and *Series breuior* ended in

the 720s, because of differences in the two versions after then. However, some of these differences can be explained by scribal corruption made during copying and by arguing that *Series breuior* is a compilation of two manuscripts, which led to the duplication of kings in the eighth century, such as Unuist son of Uurguist (found in SB as Óengus son of Fergus) and Nectan son of Der-Ilei. Elsewhere, there are duplications in the pre-historic section: SB's *Feradach Finleg* and *Douernach Uetalec* are duplicates of the king found in SL as *Uuradech Uecla*, while SB's *Uipognenet* and *Fiachua albus* correspond to SL's *Uipoignamet*, with *find* or *albus*, both meaning 'white', replacing *uec* or *uet* in the Gaelicised duplicates. This indicates that SB was a compilation of two lists which had diverged in their name-forms enough for these kings to be considered separate people, which accounts for many of the differences between SL and SB. When these duplicates are taken into account, there are insufficient differences between SL and SB to argue strongly that these lists were independent of each other as early as the 720s. From their contents and name-forms it is likely that the common source continued until at least 834, shortly before the *Series longior* version was created; therefore it is possible to reconstruct at least in part two late Pictish versions of the king-list, one the common source of *Series breuior* and *Series longior*, the other the *Series longior* version itself.<sup>9</sup>

As well as advances in our understanding of textual issues, and the belief systems underlying these texts, the royal names, themselves a major source for Pictish culture and language, could receive more attention. The forms in the different groups were studied by H.M. Chadwick (1949, 7-33) and Marjorie Anderson (90-2, 96-8), but more in-depth linguistic analyses have been undertaken by Kenneth Jackson (1955, 144-6, 161-6), and more recently John Koch (1983, 214-20), partly in conjunction with Katherine Forsyth (2000, 23-4, 33-4). The main problem with the studies from Jackson's onwards is that they were often reliant on the SL king-list (particularly SL1), which contains names in Pictish orthography, but does not necessarily preserve unchanged Pictish forms.<sup>10</sup> While the orthography of the *Series breuior* list has been substantially Gaelicised, when the relationships of the SB list are altered according to Broun's re-assessment of the Alba lists, the archetype of that group produces name-forms closer to that of SL.<sup>11</sup> A comparative analysis of the names in the lists could, therefore, produce a more accurate picture of the Pictish language, and of the transmission of these names into the late medieval period.

When we turn to another group of sources, accounts of the Pictish settlement in Britain, it is clear that our understanding of their textual histories has also grown considerably, but there is still a considerable amount that could be done. These can be divided into two groups: one tradition is found in Bede's 'Ecclesiastical History of the English People', and Irish versions of the ninth century or later, while the other occurs in Brittonic sources. In the first group the accounts vary in their content, but their core narrative is that the Picts or Cruithin went to Ireland, obtained Irish wives and settled in northern Britain. Some accounts also contain the information that as part of the marriage deal, a stipulation was made that succession amongst the Picts should pass through the female line. For a list of these, see below:

1) Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, 'The Ecclesiastical History of the English People', I.1 (Colgrave & Mynors 1969, 18-19), finished 731. This was one of the sources for the accounts in Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Historia Regum Britanniae*, IV, 17 (Faral 1929, III, 63-103), and *Brut y Brenhinedd* (Parry 1937, 85-6). Other late medieval versions, including Scottish accounts, were at least partially based on these (Skene 1867, 155-60, 163-6; MacQueen & MacQueen 1993, 60-1, 68-75, 86-7;

MacQueen & MacQueen 1989, 296-9; Broun, 1999, 84-5; King 2005, 20-3), but require further study.

2) Mael Muru Othna (*ob.* 887), *Can a mbunadas na nGaedel*, 'From whence do the Gaels originate?' Gearóid Mac Eoin translated the relevant lines (1964, 140) and designated it Version 1. The Book of Leinster version was edited by R.I. Best and M.A. O'Brien (1957, lines 15990-16158), with the relevant section being lines 16077-80 and 16097-100.

3) Part of *Senchas Síil hÍr*, 'The History of the Descendants of Ír' (Dobbs 1923, 64-9) containing some Old Irish linguistic forms (which, therefore, probably date to the early tenth century or before), but surviving in later manuscripts. There is also a related account in *Lebor Gabála Éirenn* §156). This is Mac Eoin's Version 2.

4) Episodes in *Lebor Bretnach* (hereafter *LB*) (Van Hamel 1932), 'The British Book', written 1058x1093 (but with subsequent additions), and *Lebor Gabála Éirenn* (hereafter *LGE*) (Macalister 1938-56; Carey 1983), 'The Book of the Invasions of Ireland':<sup>12</sup>

a) *LB* §13 from the original text (1058x1093). This is based on the SL3 Pictish king-list and other origin-legend material. This is Mac Eoin's Version 5.

b) *LGE* §490, 491, 495 (In Mark Scowcroft's account of the development of the Cruithin material (1987, 116-19), this is the first stage, found in recension  $\mu$ ). This version is preserved in the Book of Fermoy. It is related to *LB* §6 (in Roman script), a late addition to *Lebor Bretnach* found in MSS. B and Lb. It is part of Mac Eoin's Version 4.

c) *LGE* §492, 493, 494 (Scowcroft's second stage, in recension  $m$ ), *LB* §6 (Roman script). It is accompanied by the poem *Cruithnig cid dosfarclam* (*LB* §7, *LGE* poem XC), which is related to it, but has some different details. It is part of Mac Eoin's Version 4.

d) *LB* §6 (in italics), *LGE* §498 (part of Scowcroft's third stage, in recension  $l$ ). It is a late addition only found in *Lebor Bretnach* MS. Lb. Probably a conflation of the account in *Senchus Síil nÍr* (see number 3), and b) or c). This is Mac Eoin's Version 3.

e) *LGE* poem LXXXIX, about Ard Lemnachta, concerned with battles of the Cruithin in Leinster (part of Scowcroft's third stage). The same tale is also found in *Senchas Arda Lemnachta láin* (Gwynn 1903-35, III, 164 f.). It is part of Mac Eoin's Version 4.

These often very brief accounts, surviving in many complicated sources, mostly from after the Pictish period, have provided a considerable challenge to scholars, so there have been relatively few detailed studies of these settlement tales since *The Problem of the Picts*. However, our understanding of *Lebor Bretnach* and *Lebor Gabála Éirenn*, which contain many of the versions of the settlement tale and survive in manuscripts from the end of the eleventh century or later, has been transformed by David Dumville (1975-6), Mark Scowcroft (1987; 1988) and John Carey (1994). The stemmatic analyses by the first two of these scholars enable the identification of when

material on the Picts was included in these complex texts. However, while these underlying sources have been studied, less work has been done on the Pictish accounts in them since Wainwright's time, apart from analyses by Gearóid Mac Eoin (1964), Marjorie Anderson (1973, 77-84), and Molly Miller (1982). Mac Eoin, in his study of the origin legend's development (1964, 138-40), made the important discovery that the wrong poem with information on the Picts had been attributed to Máel Muru Othna (Chadwick 1949, 84-6; O'Rahilly 1946, 343-4) who lived in the ninth century; in fact the poem *Can a mbunadas na nGaedel* (number 2), rather than *Cruithnig cid dosfarclam* (in 4c) was by Máel Muru. In *Can a mbunadas na nGaedel* the Cruithin (the Gaelic word for the Picts) briefly appear in the account to steal the women of the sons of Míl (the settlers in Ireland from whom the Gaels were descended), forcing the sons of Míl to marry the Túatha Dé Danann (the euhemerised gods) (Mac Eoin, 1964, 140, 147-8). This poem contains a few elements found in other texts, such as Cruithne mac Cinge (who is also the first king in the Pictish king-lists), but not the marriage alliance between the Cruithin and the Gaels, although the marriage agreement between the sons of Míl and the Túatha Dé Danann displays some parallels with this. As a result of Mac Eoin's re-identification (1964, 138-40), the much more elaborate origin-legend in *Cruithnig cid dosfarclam* could date from much later than the ninth-century, since it is found as an addition to *Lebor Bretnach* and *Lebor Gabála Éirenn*.

Mac Eoin's analysis involves many other important points, but it also contains unsubstantiated assumptions, which means that his overall reconstruction of the origin legend's development is suspect. Mac Eoin argued (1964, 148, 153) that the earliest version of the tale is represented by Máel Muru's poem, which he dated to before A.D. 600, since it showed the 'Goidelic ancestors in a more realistic light', being 'an echo of what must have happened after the Goidelic invasion'. As with Máel Muru's poem, he proposed (Mac Eoin 1964, 148-9, 153) that the version in *Senchus Síol hÍr* was early (about A.D. 600) because it disagreed with the view of Irish history found in what Mac Eoin considered the *Lebor Gabála Éirenn* tradition, and that it was altered to explain the Pictish practice of matrilinear succession (through the female line) among the Picts. According to Mac Eoin (1964, 149-53), most of the accounts added to *Lebor Gabála Éirenn* and *Lebor Bretnach* (numbers 4a-d) were also derived from a version produced before Bede independently adapted it in 731, changing the Thracian origin of the Pictish to a Scythian origin. Apart from the fact that scholars would now view medieval depictions of Irish prehistory as predominantly medieval constructions which did not reflect real folk memories, Mac Eoin's analysis assumed that there was a somewhat fixed *Lebor Gabála* tradition in the early medieval period, and that some elements, such as Bede's Scythian origin for the Picts, must be late additions, even though Bede's account is probably the earliest surviving source.<sup>13</sup> While there clearly was a version of the tale before Bede's, the possibility that Irish accounts borrowed ideas from Bede, or were significantly the products of their own literary and social contexts, was not sufficiently considered by Mac Eoin. To some extent Molly Miller, in her article 'Matriliny by Treaty' (1982, 133-50) gave more emphasis to the view that versions could represent Gaelic viewpoints after the Pictish period ended in the ninth century, rather than arguing that these depictions date from the seventh century or earlier. However, Miller did not reconstruct the textual history of these accounts, because her focus was on attitudes towards the Picts and Pictish matriliney, which, as with Mac Eoin's study, led to other aspects of these texts being overlooked.<sup>14</sup>

Indeed, it is probably fair to state that the use as evidence of the origin-legends (and, to a lesser extent, the king-lists), has been focussed on the matriliney issue. For Wainwright (1955, 25), as for others of his time, Pictish matriliney was a fact. This view continued to be held in the following decades, in which studies discussed matriliney in anthropological terms, made comparisons with different cultures and reconstructed the Pictish royal family tree in various ways (Mac Eoin 1964; Henderson 1967, 31-3; Jackson, A. 1971; Anderson 1973; Kirby 1976, 298-311; Boyle 1977; Miller 1978, 51-6; Miller 1979a, 51-6; Miller 1982). In *Warlords and Holy Men*, Alfred Smyth challenged this (1984, 57-75); he argued that there was no matriliney, and explained away the origin legends as Gaelic propaganda. He also proposed that the king-list evidence, that no sons succeeded their fathers before the eighth century, could be explained by the theory that the kingship rotated between different dynasties, and that other kings were foreign intruders who gained power by force. Since then, Smyth's case has been countered by David Sellar (1985, 35-41), and then restated using different evidence by Alex Woolf (1998) and Alisdair Ross (1999). Whatever the correct conclusion is, the debate on Pictish matriliney has produced useful comparisons with succession-systems elsewhere, for instance in Ireland and Anglo-Saxon England,<sup>15</sup> has focussed attention on the nature of Pictish kingship, and produced new ideas. But it is possible that the focus on the matriliney issue has led to other important aspects of these sources being overlooked or underemphasised (Evans 2008).

Much work can still be done on the origin-legends, through the study of details in the tales and of these sources' individual contexts, so that a more comprehensive understanding of their development can be constructed.<sup>16</sup> For example, the two main Pictish leaders in the accounts are Cruithne son of Cinge and Cathluan son of Caitming or Gub. However, while Cruithne is found in accounts before 900, in both the Pictish king-list archetype and Máel Muru Othna's poem, Cathluan is not found as a Pict in any texts before the poem *Duan Albanach*, written in the late eleventh century.<sup>17</sup> Cathluan was probably the seventh-century British king Cadwallon, borrowed from the early ninth-century Welsh text, *Historia Brittonum* (Morris 1980, 37, 38, 78, 79).<sup>18</sup> The appearance of Cathluan in a Pictish origin legend is, therefore, perhaps one indication that the account contains post-Pictish elements, although the context of his inclusion deserves further consideration. By identifying when other elements were included in the origin-legends, it may be possible to reconstruct what, if anything, is reliable evidence for Pictish culture.

Another case is the origin-legend in *Senchus Síol hÍr* (Dobbs 1923, 64-5; Mac Eoin, 1964, 149) which may contain Old Irish forms and the potentially early statement that the Cruithin created 'swordland' in the plains of Fortriu and Circinn (probably the main plains of northern and southern Pictland respectively). However, the statement that the soldiers of Thrace (the Cruithin), as part of the deal by which they obtained wives from the Irish, agreed through a contract with the men of Ireland that not only lordship but also every inheritance would be according to the (Irish) mothers<sup>19</sup> could represent a later alteration, in the late ninth century or later, when Gaelic-speaking rulers controlled formerly Pictish territory. The implication would be that the kingship, territory and property of the Picts would pass to the Irish. It is clear that the development of this text, and the accompanying section on the kings of the Cruithin of Alba who ruled Ireland (Dobbs 1923, 64-7), require further analysis in the context of the development of traditions about the Cruithin in Ireland, before this tale can be used with confidence as evidence for the Picts.



Indeed, the whole issue of the relationship between the Picts and the Irish Cruithin could provide one, albeit difficult, avenue for future research. As Anderson (1950, 13-16; 1973, 79-84, 90) and Chadwick (1949, 3-5, 81-8, 99-107, 116-19), among others (MacNeill 1933; O'Rahilly 1946, 343-52) have demonstrated, there are many links between the Pictish king-lists and the origin-legends, as well as characters shared with Irish literature on the ancient past. This is largely because the Picts shared the same name in Gaelic as people in Ireland, called *Cruithin*. A strict definition, that the Picts and the Irish Cruithin should be regarded as completely separate peoples, since the Irish Cruithin were not called Picts, was made by scholars such as Marjorie Anderson (1973, 80, 129-30) and Kenneth Jackson (1955, 158-9) because of the casual manner in which the two groups had been associated by previous scholars, with negative results. This distinction, however, should not prevent us from exploring the connections that medieval people thought existed between the Picts and the Irish Cruithin, even if this had no ancient reality.<sup>20</sup> Such a task would involve require a careful study of the Irish Cruithin in the context of the Irish pseudo-historical tradition.

The other group of texts on Pictish origins is found in Brittonic sources, mainly derived from Gildas's polemical tract, *De Excidio Britanniae* (Winterbottom 1978), which was written in the first half of the sixth century. This tradition has received far less attention from scholars interested in the Picts, with the exception of Miller (1982, 135-6, 148). In Gildas's account of the end of Roman domination and the conquests of the Anglo-Saxons, he stated that the Picts were an overseas nation, and that they took and kept the northern part of Britain up to the wall (Wright 1985, 86-92, 104-5). The meaning of this has been much debated, but the most likely conclusion, persuasively argued by Neil Wright, is that Gildas was describing the settlement of the Picts in northern Britain, subordinating his history to his overall argument.<sup>21</sup> Gildas's settlement tale was influential: it was a source for Bede's *Chronica Maiora*, written in 725 (although in his 'Ecclesiastical History' Bede altered his account, making it clear that the Picts had already been in Britain), for the *Vita Sancti Teiliaui*, probably written in the early twelfth century, and for Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* (Wright, 1985, 92-100).<sup>22</sup>

Another Brittonic account is *Historia Brittonum* (HB), written 829/30, probably in Gwynedd (Dumville 1990; Dumville 1994, 406). A critical edition of this text was produced by Faral (1929), but editions have also been made of the important version in MS Harley 3859 (Morris, 1980) and the Vatican recension (Dumville 1985). In §12 of *Historia Brittonum*, the Picts took the Orkneys at least 800 years before Brutus arrived in Britain, and then later, after wasting many lands, they occupied the northern third of Britain (Morris 1980, 20, 61). This was probably also based on Gildas, as is indicated by the emphasis on Pictish aggression and the settlement of the Picts from overseas to the north.<sup>23</sup> The identification of the Orkneys as an intermediate place of settlement was an innovation, probably inferred from Gildas's text, but also perhaps influenced, as Molly Miller suggested (1982, 135), by its recent conquest by Scandinavians in the ninth century.<sup>24</sup> It is likely that the Pictish settlement was put earlier so that the Irish settlers of Dál Riata took Pictish land (Morris 1980, 20-1, 62) but that some aspects of Gildas's Pictish settlement account were retained in *Historia Brittonum*.

It is difficult to determine whether the Brittonic account of the Pictish settlement was known in Pictland itself, but *Historia Brittonum* and Bede's *Chronica Maiora* did achieve quite a wide circulation, so this is possible. What is probable is that *Historia Brittonum* was known in the Gaelic kingdom of Alba in the following

period, since *Lebor Bretnach*, and the ‘Nennian’ recension it was largely based on, were written in Alba, the former in the reign of Máel Coluim III (1058–93) (Clancy, 2000).<sup>25</sup> Indeed, in *Lebor Bretnach* §13 (Van Hamel 1932, 23-4) there is an attempt to combine the Orcadian settlement of *Historia Brittonum*, the SL3 Pictish king-list, and the elements of the Cruithin legend, such as the travels of Cruithne, into a single condensed narrative. *Lebor Bretnach*, therefore, like Bede’s ‘Ecclesiastical History’, represents a combination of the two main traditions about the Pictish settlement.

Another area of debate in which it is possible to gain insights is Pictish literacy. In the 1970s Kathleen Hughes (1970; 1980, 1-21) argued that the Picts used writing less than elsewhere, confining its use mainly to liturgical texts and king-lists, rather than more sophisticated genres. She argued that the general lack of Pictish documents could not be explained by later losses. This view was countered by David Kirby (1973, 12 n. 31) and Katherine Forsyth (1998), who cited the inscriptions of Pictland, as well as references to writing in Bede’s ‘Ecclesiastical History’, as evidence for a considerable degree of literacy. Hughes (1970, 4-8; 1980, 5-6, 10, 14) had discussed the Pictish king-lists, but she considered them to be rather unsophisticated. However, they may actually provide evidence, not only for scholarly contacts with the Gaelic world, but also other genres: the foundation note for Abernethy in *Series longior* (Anderson 1973, 247), perhaps included in the ninth century, describes the property bounds of the grant, which shows the use of writing for recording land ownership, as well as including a tale in which king Nechtan received the kingship of all the Pictish provinces through the intercession of St Brigit, in return for which he granted Abernethy to God and Brigit.<sup>26</sup> This demonstrates knowledge of hagiographic conventions and the use of writing to provide ideological support for both the community and the kingship of all the Picts.

As has already been discussed, in both the Pictish king-lists and the origin-legends there is evidence for close links between Irish and Pictish scholarship. For instance, Cruithne son of Cinge appears as the first king in the Pictish king-lists and as a leader of the Cruithin in some Irish versions of the Pictish origin-legend. Also, there are strong textual parallels between the *Series longior* Pictish king-list additions and the section in the Dál nAraide tract, *Senchus Síl nÍr*, which follows the Cruithin settlement tale (Anderson 1973, 81). There are, therefore, indications in these texts of a Pictish literate culture, albeit with a strong Gaelic influence.

The Pictish king-lists also provide evidence relevant to the literacy debate in another way. Through their very survival, the Pictish king-lists hint at why other Pictish texts might not have survived; one group, *Series breuior*, survived only in Scottish manuscripts (Anderson 1973, 52-67), probably because in the twelfth century St Andrews used it to locate its foundation in the Pictish period (cf. Anderson 1973, 98-100), and then, as Dauvit Broun has discussed (1999, 197-9), it was later employed by Scottish kings to legitimise the territorial extent and antiquity of the Scottish realm in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The other group, *Series longior* was not used in this way, and does not survive in any Scottish manuscripts; it is found in Ireland, in historical texts, and in the fourteenth-century northern English Poppleton manuscript. From the foundation notes in this group, it probably had been kept in Abernethy for a considerable period from the ninth century onwards (Anderson, 1973, 92-3, 102).

Given the general lack of manuscripts from early medieval Celtic societies which survived in the countries themselves, survival depended on texts being considered to be worth copying repeatedly, which was unlikely for Pictish texts. The

Pictish king-lists exist because they were adaptable and could be re-used for different purposes, but even then only when there was sustained interest over the medieval period; other Pictish texts, such as genealogies, with a more confined purpose, were less adaptable and would have been lost.<sup>27</sup> The processes of Gaelicisation and Anglo-Normanisation probably prevented much continuity from the Pictish period (Hughes, 1980, 15-16; Broun, 1998, 183-201), except in ecclesiastical centres, such as St Andrews and Abernethy, which had Pictish origins. Given this, Katherine Forsyth's view (1998, 39-61) that Kathleen Hughes over-estimated the chances of survival is likely to be correct, even though Hughes herself stressed the barriers to survival for early medieval texts (1980, 3, 11-21).

In conclusion, there have been considerable advances in our understanding of the Pictish origin legends and king-lists since the writing of *The Problem of the Picts*. However, much work can still be done in many areas, on their textual development, and also on their changing meanings for contemporary audiences. It is to be hoped that scholars will continue to employ varied approaches to these texts, and continue the trend in considering them from a number of perspectives, since they can provide significant evidence for Pictish culture and how they were perceived by others, both their contemporaries and later writers.

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### Notes

1. Other medieval sources which dealt with Pictish history, for instance the Irish annals, the 'Chronicle of the Kings of Alba', tales about the destruction of the Picts, and the St Andrews foundation legend, would also have provided useful material for analysis.
2. Anderson (1950, 13), used the terms List I (for SL) and List II (for SB).
3. However, extracts (Miller's SL2E) from another version were also printed in 1662 by John Lynch in his *Cambrensis Eversus* (Anderson 1973, 78).
4. The relationship of the Pictish king-lists to the Pictish material in Bede's 'Ecclesiastical History' was the subject of an article by A.A.M. Duncan (1981), who argued that the Northumbrian monk Ecgberht played an important role in the transmission of these texts. However, see Evans, 'The Calculation of Columba's Arrival in Britain in Bede's 'Ecclesiastical History' and the Pictish King-lists' (forthcoming, 2008), for a different interpretation of the inter-relationship.
5. With minor exceptions, Anderson (1973, 63-4, 212-15, 234) viewed Fordun's king-list source to have been derived from the archetype of SB, but it is more likely that it was compiled from at least three versions, one of which was a version of SB sharing a

common source with the archetype of the SB list (I intend to include a more detailed analysis of this in a forthcoming monograph).

6. Miller implied that SB and SL2 were more closely related to each other than to SL1 (1979b, 2, 11) and that the beginning of the Fordun king-list was 231 B.C., corresponding to the Nennian recension of HB's 'nine centuries after Brutus' for the *aduentus Pictorum* (1979b 12, 22). From this Miller drew the conclusion (1979b, 26-7, 32-4) that the Welsh had access to Fordun's source by c. 1050, and, therefore, that Fordun's source was in existence by then.

7. See Broun 1999, 16-32, for a study of the manuscripts of John of Fordun's *Chronica Gentis Scotorum*, and the identification of the text in Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Cod. Guelf. Helmstadiensis 538 as a copy of the text in London, British Library, MS. Add. 37223, but with additional errors.

8. The alliteration with C and F of the seven names in the SL list makes it likely that a Gaelic poetic source was used, but the form *Cirig* in the poem and SL3 in general is found as *Circin* in SL1 and SL2, so *Cirig* was probably a late alteration. The stanza could be a late creation from SL3, but it is also possible that an earlier *Circin* in the stanza was altered to *Cirig* when or after it was included in SL3. See Anderson 1973, 82-4, for different reasons for the view that SL3 was a derivative version.

9. I intend to undertake a more detailed study of this issue in a forthcoming monograph.

10. Jackson was open about his rejection of *Series breuior* as evidence for Pictish linguistics when he stated (1955, 144) that 'only Recension I [meaning *Series longior*] will be regarded as evidence on the nature of the Pictish language'.

11. Broun (1999, 137, n. 30), noted a correct reading in MS. I of the Alba king-list (accompanying the *Series breuior* Pictish list) not found in the other manuscripts of that group. If, as is likely, this also is the case for the Pictish king-list, it indicates that MS. I is a witness independent of the other manuscripts of the *Series breuior* common source, and does not share an intervening common ancestor with MS. F, as Anderson (1973, 60-3, 234) argued. I intend to discuss this in more detail in a forthcoming monograph, also including critical editions of the *Series longior* and *Series breuior* archetypes, as well as a partial reconstruction of the king-list sources available to John of Fordun.

12. *Lebor Gabála Éirenn* was very confusingly edited by R.A.S. Macalister as a single text, but editions of individual recensions (versions) are gradually appearing. The first recension has been partially edited by John Carey (1983).

13. See James Fraser's chapter, this volume. The Scythian origin comes from *pictique Agathyrsi* in Virgil's *Aeneid*, IV, 146, via a commentary by Servius, and the Thracian origin (which may not be completely incompatible with the other view) comes from *pictique Geloni* in Virgil's *Georgics*, I, 115, Gelonus being a son of Hercules (see Miller, "Matriliny by Treaty", 144, n. 31). Both derivations are reflected in *Lebor Bretnach* §13, which describes the Picts who took the Orkneys as *Clanda Gaileoin . . . meic Earcoil*, and explains that these were *Istoreth mac Istoirine meic Aigine meic Agaitheris* (*Lebor Bretnach*, §13, ed. Van Hamel, 23).

14. Miller's focus on matriliney even extended to arguing that texts, such as *Historia Brittonum*, did not mention Pictish matriliney on purpose, in order to deny the legality of the Pictish settlement (1982, 136).

15. Numerous anthropological comparisons with modern peoples were made by those in favour of matriliney (see for instance Boyle's article (1977, 2, 5-10), but the problems with this approach have been highlighted by Ross (1999, 13-14). Alfred Smyth (1984, 67-72) suggested that the Picts had a kingship which oscillated between

different dynasties, like early medieval Leinster, a similarity which was rejected by Sellar (1985, 39-40). Alex Woolf (1998, 150-9, 165-7) also made a comparison with Anglo-Saxon, Danish, and Welsh kingships, and succession under Roman law.

16. See, for instance, Zumbuhl (2006, 11-24), for a study placing a related text, *Duan Albanach*, in context (including the Pictish origin-legends), and discussing individual details profitably (including the largely ignored statement in the Pictish origin-legend that there were seventy Pictish kings from Cathluan to Constantine).

17. As well as the Pictish king-lists and Máel Muru's poem, Cruithne (or Cruithnechan) is found (**see above, 5**) in numbers 4a, 4b, in 4c the poem *Cruithnig cid dosfarclam* (although in LB §6 and LGE §§492, 493, and 494 Cruithne has been relegated to the status of a *cerd*, 'wright'), and 4d. Cathluan appears in the *Duan Albanach*, edited (1956) and translated (1957) by Kenneth Jackson, as well as the SL2 king-lists, 4b, and 4c.

18. Cadwallon is spelt in the Harleian MS. as *Catguollauni*, and *Catgublaun*, which could become re-ordered as *Catluan* ('battle-light') son of Gub and Cadwallon's son *Catgualart* could perhaps be Cathluan's son *Catinoladar* (using LB §6's spelling).

19. Mac Eoin (1964, 151-2) translated *iar mathra* as 'according to the mother's kin' (using the noun *máithre*) rather than 'according to the mothers' (using *máthair*), which would probably mean that the kingship and inheritance of the Cruithin would have passed to the men of Ireland.

20. That the Picts themselves, thought connected to the Cruithin is indicated by the additions made to the SL king-list, in which their eponymous ancestor *Cruithne filiis Cinge* is described (in SL1) as *pater Pictorum habitantium in hac insula*, 'father of the Picts living on this island'. This indicates that other Picts were considered to be living elsewhere, presumably in Ireland, but Anderson (1973, 80) thought that the qualifying phrase was unnecessary, and that *Pictorum* must have been translated from *Cruithne(ch)*, because of her view that the term *Picti* could only be used for the people in Britain.

21. It also may have reflected knowledge that there had not been a people called the Picts before the Romans, combined with little understanding of how the Picts had come to be present in northern Britain.

22. If, as Wright (1985, 95-6) proposes, the reason for Bede's alterations was that he was following the account of Pictish origins in I.1 (**see above, 4**), which placed their settlement in pre-history, then it is likely that Bede's source for the Pictish origin legend was obtained 725x31.

23. Other evidence that Gildas was used for the Picts is found later in sections 15 and 23 (Morris, 1980, 21, 24, 62, 64-5) where *HB* has statements that the Irish from the west and the Picts from the north attacked the Picts, and that the British were unused to weapons, which are based on Gildas, *De Excidio Britanniae* section 14 (Winterbottom 1978, 21, 93). Later references to the attacks of the Picts and Irish in Roman and post-Roman times in sections 30 and 31 are also likely to have been based on *De Excidio* sections 16-17 (Winterbottom 1978, 21-2, 94). For the use of Gildas's text in *HB* overall, see Dumville, "Sub-Roman Britain: History and Legend", (1977, 180, n. 31).

24. Knowledge of Scandinavian settlement is indicated by the description in §8 (Morris 1980, 18, 59) of the Orkneys as '*ultra Pictos*', 'beyond the Picts'.

25. The 'Nennian' recension was itself derived from a copy of *Historia Brittonum* in Wales in 907/8 or 912 (Dumville 1972-4, 86-94, repr. Dumville 1990).

26. The note is only found in SL1, so it could potentially date to as late as the twelfth century. Anderson (1973, 92-6) thought that it was added later than the ninth century,

but that the bounds were perhaps ‘really ancient boundaries of the church lands of Abernethy’ (Anderson 1973, 95). For a study of the bounds, see Taylor (2005). However, a Pictish context best fits the contents, and the name *Nectonius magnus filius Wirp* is in Pictish orthography, and it does not contradict the preceding note on the foundation of Abernethy common to the SL group, so it is possible that the longer note was omitted when it was included with *Lebor Bretnach*.

27. As James Fraser has pointed out to me (and Hughes, 1970, 3-4, noticed), the lack of Pictish texts and manuscripts surviving elsewhere in Europe is significant, but not necessarily for Pictish literacy, since it could also reflect the nature of links with the Continent.

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